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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how multicultural education via the curriculum can enable schools to educate rather than school the student. Multicultural education assumes that: (1) ethnicity and culture are salient parts of U.S. life; (2) ethnic diversity is a positive element in a society because it enriches a nation and increases the ways in which its citizens can perceive and solve personal and public problems; (3) to create educational reform, major changes are needed in the educational system; (4) individuals who only see the world from their unique cultural and ethnic perspective are denied important parts of the human experience; (5) a monocultural educational approach is presently in operation in U.S. schools; (6) multicultural education is needed as much, if not more, by an Anglo-American middle income suburban child as it is by a Mexican American child who lives in the barrio; and (7) the concern is with modifying the total content of education and the educational environment so they are more truly reflective of the diversity within and outside of the United States. To date no significant, comprehensive studies compare and contrast students who experience multicultural education with those who do not. There is a shortage of both quantitative and qualitative data to support either proponents or opponents of multiculturalism. The paper conducts a theoretical discussion of the issue based on research. (Contains 29 references.) (EH)

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP AND MOVING STUDENTS TOWARD THE ACQUISITION OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

BY

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Multicultural Education: Bridging the Knowledge Gap and Moving Students Toward the Acquisition of Critical Thinking Skills

INTRODUCTION

Those who hear the ringing of only one bell hear only one thing.

- Proverb of the Ewe people of Ghana, West Africa

The idea of multicultural education has gained considerable currency in the United States during the last ten years, and has become a subject of discussion and controversy. For the conservative critics, it represents an attempt to politicize education in order to pander to minority demands, whereas for some radicals it is the familiar ideological device of perpetuating the reality of racist exploitation of ethnic minorities by pampering their cultural sensitivities (Parekh, 1986) Alfred North Whitehead (1929) explains that according to the traditional and widely accepted view of education, education seeks to achieve the following objectives. First, it aims to cultivate such basic human capacities as critical reflection, imagination, self-criticism, the ability to reason, argue, weigh evidence and form an independent judgment. It is hoped that as a result of acquiring these and other related capacities, the pupil will one day become capable of self-determination and live a free man's life, that is a life free from ignorance, prejudices, superstitions and dogmas and one in which he freely chooses his beliefs and plans his pattern of life. Second, it aims to foster intellectual and moral qualities such as the love of truth, openness to the world, objectivity, intellectual curiosity, humility, healthy skepticism about all "claims to finality" and respect and concern for others. Third, it aims to familiarize the pupil with the great intellectual, moral, religious, literary, and other achievements of the human spirit. It is concerned to initiate him not merely into the cultural capital of his own community but of all of humankind in so far as this is possible, and thus to humanize rather than merely socialize him. The student is to be taught languages, history, geography, culture, social structures, religions and so on of other communities "in order that his

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sympathies and affections are enlarged" and he learns to appreciate the unity and diversity of mankind.

While this view of education is intellectually persuasive and more coherent than its rivals, it suffers from a serious defect. It is sociologically naive. It does not take account of the way in which its realization in practice is constantly frustrated by the social context in which every educational system exists and functions.

An educational system does not exist in a historical and social vacuum. Parekh (1986) elaborates:

> The educational institution is an integral part of a specific social structure by which it is profoundly shaped. A social structure, further, is not a homogeneous whole, but composed of different classes, religions and communities. If it is to endure, it must develop a common public culture, that is, a generally shared body of values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions about man and society. Of the diverse and even conflicting cultures that obtain in any lively society, one generally acquires dominance. It is presented as *the* culture of that society and is embodied in its legal, moral, political, economic, educational, and other institutions and becomes its official or dominant public culture.

What follows is that the educational system disseminates the dominant culture among the young and ensures its preservation and reproduction across the generations. Thus, education's structure, organization, ethos, pedagogical techniques, its view of what constitutes knowledge and what is worth teaching are all profoundly shaped by the dominant culture. What is more, the institution of education does not merely disseminate but also legitimizes the dominant culture. The school is an authoritarian institution in the sense that the teachers wield both intellectual and legal authority; they know the subject whereas their pupils do not, and they have the power to punish and discipline their pupils (Tesconi, 1979). By deciding to teach X rather than Y, teachers proclaim X is worth studying and Y is not, and in effect succeed in throwing the full weight of their intellectual and legal weight behind it. By teaching X in a certain manner, they imply that this is the only correct way of looking at it (Banks, 1977).

SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREA

Historically, the American school has accepted the "melting pot" idea. It has rejected the ethnic culture of the ethnic child, ridiculed it, and forced him to accept Anglo-Saxon values, beliefs, and behaviors. The multiethnic school rejects the "melting pot" idea and recognizes and accepts the child's ethnicity and culture. It is guided by a philosophy which may be called ethnic or cultural pluralism (Bennett, 1986). It also recognizes that the child must learn to function effectively in both ethnic culture and in the mainstream cultures. However, when multicultural education is truly actualized and its tenets come to complete fruition the notion of a mainstream culture as one that is reflective of one culture is obliterated. Nevertheless, the school's role is to enable the child to function successfully within and across cultures. Schools will continue to function as monoliths dedicated to restricting the intellectual growth of their students as long as the curriculum remains monocultural . How multicultural education via the curriculum can enable the schools to *educate* rather than *school* the student is the ultimate issue addressed in this analysis.

ASSUMPTIONS

Multicultural education assumes that ethnicity and culture are salient parts of American life. Also assumed is that ethnic diversity is a positive element in a society because it enriches a nation and increases the ways in which its citizens can perceive and solve personal and public problems. Ethnic and cultural diversity also enrich a society because they provide individuals with more opportunities to experience other ethnic and cultural groups and thus become more fulfilled as human beings. When individuals are able to participate in a variety of ethnic cultures they are more able to benefit from the total human experience (Banks, 1977). Multicultural education, as a reform movement, assumes the necessity of making some major changes in the education; its advocates believe that many school practices related to race and ethnicity are harmful to students and reinforce

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many of the stereotypes and discriminatory practices in American society, including the political, economic, and social structures of white supremacy.

Multicultural education assumes that individuals who only know, participate in , and see the world from their unique cultural and ethnic perspective are denied important parts of the human experience and are "culturally and ethnically encapsulated" (Miel, 1967). "Culturally and ethnically encapsulated" individuals are also unable to fully know and to see their own cultures because of their cultural and ethnic blinders (Banks, 1977). Furthermore, proponents of multicultural education assert that historically the American school system has focused primarily on the culture of the Anglo-American child; as such the school has been and still is primarily an extension of the Anglo-American child's home and community (Banks, 1977). The Anglo-centric curriculum which still exists to varying degrees in most American schools, has harmful consequences for both the Anglo-American child and ethnic minorities such as African-American children and Hispanic American children. Additionally, the Anglo-centric curriculum negatively affects the ethnic child of color because he or she may find the school culture alien, hostile, and self-defeating (Cortes, 1976). A multicultural educational approach assumes that a monocultural educational approach is presently in operation in American schools, and that mono-culturalism tends to breed a false intellectual and moral arrogance and insensitivity -- by-products of ignorance based on a lack of exposure and truthful education. Mono-culturalism is equated with indoctrination and "schooling" (Davies, 1976); multiculturalism is equated with true education. Mono-culturalism impedes the student's ability to acquire and utilize critical thinking skills (Yao, 1984). Furthermore, a major assumption made by advocates of multicultural education is that is needed as much if not more by an Anglo-American middle income suburban child as it is by a Mexican American child who lives in the barrio. Finally, multicultural education reaches far beyond social studies. It is concerned with modifying the total content of education as well as the educational environment so that they are more reflective of cultural and ethnic diversity within and outside of American society (Banks, 1977).

LIMITATIONS

To date there are no significant and comprehensive studies which might compare and contrast students who experience multicultural education as opposed to those who experience a monocultural education. There is a decided paucity of quantitative and qualitative data to support the assumptions and claims made by proponents of multiculturalism as well as the assumptions and claims made by the critics of multiculturalism. Thus the presentation here is based on theoretical discussion of the issue.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Events within the last decade have dramatically indicated that we live in a world society that is beset with momentous societal and human problems, many of which are related to ethnic and cultural hostility and conflict. Effective solutions to these tremendous problems can be found only by an active, compassionate, and culturally sensitive citizenry capable of making sound public decisions that will benefit our ethnically diverse world community (Sikkema and Niyekawa, 1987).

The current school curriculum is not helping most of our youths to prepare to function within a world community of the future (Williams, 1977). Many students grow up within middle-class Anglo communities and attend all-white or predominantly white middle-class schools. Their world is very different from the world society in which they will be required to function in the future. The white race in a world minority. Five out of six persons in the world are non-white and most are non-Christians. Because the birth-rate of non-whites greatly exceeds that of whites, white Christians will be an even smaller world minority by the year 2000. And by the year 2000, fifty-five percent of the American school population will be more reflective of world demographics. Thus the school should present all students with cultural, ethnic, and social class groups, with cultural and ethnic alternatives, and help them learn how to live in a world society that is ethnically and racially diverse (Banks, 1977). Intellectually, it is imperative to explain and teach a truthful world vision thus truly educating the student (Cortes, 1976).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review is divided into four parts: 1. an overview of the issue of culture in American education; 2. an elucidation on the meaning and implications of the concept of multicultural education; 3. a synopsis of the desirability of multicultural education; and, 4. an assessment of criticisms made against multicultural education.

Pizzillo (1983) explains:

> The dominant cultural orientation of public schools today and the troubled consequences of this orientation for the education of the culturally different student are grounded in the historical development of the social functions of education.

Tesconi (1975) states that schooling may be defined as the formalized means by which a society transmits its culture to the young. The concept of culture, as used here, refers to:

> ...the totality of a group's learned norms for behavior and the manifestations of this behavior. This includes the technological and economic mechanisms through which a group adapts to its environment, its related social and political institutions, and the values, goals, definitions, prescriptions, and assumptions which define and rationalize individual motivation and participation (Leacock, 1971).

Culture in this comprehensive sense refers to a "way of life." It is reflected in an individual's or a group's way of seeing the world, of feeling, valuing and acting in the world. Language, dress, patterns of social interaction in work and play, belief-systems, values, attitudes - all mirror various interrelated dimensions of an individual's or group's culture (Powdermaker, 1966).

If a society is made up of a homogeneous people - that is, a people who share the same way of life - then schooling of the young proceeds smoothly, with, for the most part few interruptions (Moore, 1969) The education the child receives in the school intimately reflects the education received at home, in the church and numerous social agencies and institutions encountered in the routines of daily life. However, this picture alters radically when a society consists of a heterogeneous population. Then the critical question becomes whose or what culture, what way of life, is the school to

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transmit? The emerging dominance of one group's way of life over others in the social, political and economic institutions of the larger society's is reflected in that society's schools. Powdermaker (1966) asserts that schooling in such contexts "extracts a high price for those who either resist absorption into the dominant culture or who are prevented, for whatever reason, from merging with the cultural life of the dominant group in today's society."

The United States has always been a pluralistic society. Its population has been drawn from numerous countries and its people reflect a potpourri of diverse cultural styles and tradition. This is not to say that the United States has been guided by pluralistic ideals. In fact the contrary is true. Pizzollo (1983) elaborates:

> The immigrants who come to this country and their children confronted a 'way of life' which was, in the majority of instances, quite different from their native cultural heritage. The dominant social, political, economic and educational institutions encountered by the new arrivals to American Society presented them with a new way of seeing the world and of feeling, valuing, and acting in the world. In short, the immigrants confronted a new culture.

Pressures, both subtle and overt were brought to bear on the newcomers in order that they would give up the Old Ways and accept the New. American Society was officially viewed as one society, with one set of ideals and values. In order to be an American, one had to look like an American, think and speak like an American, and "hold dear those beliefs, values, attitudes, and principals which were propagated as being the center of Americanism." Public schools evolved into the major social institutions responsible for assimilating the young immigrants directly and their parents indirectly, into a dominant Anglo-Saxon cultural standard, with the ultimate goal being acculturation (Gordon, 1964).

Hawke (1966) explains that the Anglo-Saxon tradition was established by the early colonists who were predominantly English and Protestant. Significant members of individuals from northern and western Europe were also present in the early settlement, but the cultures they brought with then did not deviate significantly from the dominant Anglo-Saxon majority. Tesconi (1975) notes that the diversity among the white population in the original colonies was not seen as a threat:

The diversity among the white population was not seen as a threat to or an assimilative problem for the dominant and by then presumed paradigm for the emerging American cultural standard - the Anglo-Saxon tradition. It was assumed that non-Anglo-Saxon whites would easily adjust to and assimilate into the dominant mainstream, or given the size of the new nation, fade into the woodwork, so to speak, and thus become invisible and hence nonthreatening. In short, the rich and vast wide-open spaces became a thoroughfare of escape both for those who refused to assimilate and, figuratively, for the young country which did not wish to confront the problem directly. the early establishment of English institutions (later modified by the American Revolution). The English language, and an anglicized cultural orientation in the social, political and economic life of the colonies were all never seriously threatened by early immigrants.

Those immigrants who were not Anglo-Saxon or who did not share closely related traditions could easily lose themselves in the western frontier (Hawke,1966). The non-white population, in turn, was never seriously considered as "belonging" to the emerging nation. The systematic destruction of the cultural identity and heritage of blacks by the institution of slavery as well as the active hostility of the white population toward the Indian civilization in the New World are well documented. The continuing failure of the American Indian and blacks to gain equal access to and equality of opportunity in the social, political, economic and educational institutions of American Society persists as one of the foremost tragedies of our time (Pizzollo, 1983).

Gordon (1964) asserts that the assimilation of culturally diverse immigrants into the "anglicized cultural mold of American Society "posed few problems until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The years between 1830 and 1920 witnessed the largest immigration of people in modern history. The reaction to the tremendous influx of immigrants was, during these early years, somewhat ambiguous (Hawke,1966; Noble, 1929). However, as the number of immigrants increased and their "religio-cultural orientation" shifted further away from the accepted Anglo-Saxon cultural standard, the dominant culture's response became "unequivocally directed toward the complete Americanization of immigrants. Fear, racism, and prejudice emerged as significant forces the newcomers had to contend with. Nobel (1929) presents John Quincy Adams', the Secretary of State in 1828, response in a letter to Baron von Furstenwaerther:

They (immigrants) come not to a life of independence, but to a life of labor - and, if they cannot accommodate themselves to the character, moral, political and physical, of this country with all its compensating balances of good and eveil, the Atlantic is always open to them to return to the land of their nativity and their fathers. To one thing they must make up their minds or they will be disappointed in every expectation of happiness as Americans. They must look forward to their posterity rather than backward to their ancestors; they must be sure that whatever their own feelings may be, those of their children will cling to the prejudices of this country.

The message is quite clear. The immigrants were expected to give up their cultural identity and ways of life and accept the cultural pattern of "native" Americanism. The common school became the focal institution for the Americanization process. The practices that followed out of this Americanization stood in direct contrast to the democratic and egalitarian principals and ideals which lay at the foundation of the public school (Hawke, 1966; Davies, 1976; Tesconi, 1975).

Cremin (1961) reports that the United States Immigration Commission's study in 1909 revealed that approximately 57 percent of the students in the schools of thirty-seven of the nation's largest cities were "of foreign-born parentage." In Chelsea, Massachusetts and Duluth, Minnesota the percentage was 74; in New York it was 71.5, in Chicago 67.3, and in Boston 63.5. Tyack (1967) reports that in one school in New York there were twenty-five different nationalities. All in all, there were sixty distinct ethnic groups identified in the Commission's study. Thus as Pizzolo (1986) explains:

The classroom teacher could hardly assume that her charges spoke English, much less expect that they had acquired those basic skills and social attitudes necessary for the normal functioning of the classroom. The attitudes, values, beliefs, and patterns of social interaction children brought with them from their diverse cultural backgrounds could understandably be perceived as threatening "chaos." The response of schools to this rich diversity was to institute in teachers the belief that they should "start from scratch," ignoring the child's cultural heritage and unique communal experiences.

It is important at this point to make an initial distinction between acculturation and assimilation as concepts central to identifying the dominant social function of public schooling. Anthropologist Hortense

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Powdermaker (1968) explains that assimilation can be viewed as a compromising process of adjustments and accommodation to a new cultural milieu. Individuals or groups who are assimilated take on the language, values, beliefs, attitude, and behavioral patterns which are essential to survival and, or some "modicum of success" in the new socio-cultural environment. Primary group relationships and identity grounded in the cultural heritage of an individual or group can, in large part, be retained in this process. This process is in sharp contrast to the phenomena of acculturation. The concept of acculturation has been characterized as:

> That social process whereby individual and groups "give up" (willingly, consciously, unconsciously, and so on) their standard and socially inherited ways of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting - in short, their culture - in favor of others. It connotes an absence of cultural distinctions grounded in ethnic or group membership. It implies movement toward homogeneity among peoples of diverse origins and ways of life (Tesconi, 1975).

Powdermaker (1966) contends that acculturation requires that an individual or group give up their cultural heritage and ethnic identity in order to merge or fuse completely with the dominant culture:

> The most intimate details and dimensions of daily life are transformed into modes consistent with the dominant culture. Acculturation, then, requires a commitment beyond that involved in assimilation, a commitment that many were not willing to make in spite of the enormous pressures brought to bear.

The massive numbers of children of attending public schools at the turn of the century forced dramatic changes in the structure, processes, and activities of those schools. Bits and pieces of the cultural traditions of the immigrants found their way into the fabric of American culture and society. The immigrants caused changed and were changed by the socio-cultural environment in which they found themselves. However, it must be emphasized that the full burden and responsibility for change resided with the immigrants. Pizzollo (1986) explains, "The movement to Americanize was a movement to acculturate regardless of any hesitancy on the immigrants part to give up completely his or her ethnic identity."

Cremin (1961) notes that public schools became the central social institutions for acculturating (rather than assimilating) children of foreign-born parentage. He states, "Teachers found themselves giving children baths, teaching them manners, proper dress, and correct ideas and behaviors, as well as English." Tyack (1967) observes, "Americanization required clean hands, regular use of the toothbrush, a balanced diet, patient industry, neat dress, and an idyllic Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Saxon-like middle-class family life." It wasn't enough to teach the young the English language and those cognitive skills, values and attitudes necessary for adapting to their new socio-cultural environment, that is, to assimilate the young. The school's social function became that of acculturating the young into an anglicized, middle-class conception of Americanism. In this process, the native culture of the immigrant was rejected by the public school and a "wedge was often driven between the immigrant child and his or her parents" (Gordon, 1964). Despite this the public school achieved unparalleled success in acculturating the vast majority of children who flooded ill-prepared classrooms (Kallen, 1924). The English language was taught and the dominant culture was introduced to children who, for the most part, had limited access to the world which lay outside the confines of their ethnic ghettos (Noble, 1929). However, the school's process of Americanizing the young and integrating them into the mainstream of society did not go unchallenged. Many immigrant families resisted the rejection of their cultural identity and heritages and chose to keep their children out of the public schools and to remain in their ethnic communities. However, these challenges failed to substantively alter the cultural orientation of public schools - to acculturate.

The acculturative function of public schools established in the middle nineteenth and early twentieth century continues today. Lower-income and minority groups now entering public schools confront a culture which is often in direct conflict with the culture of their homes and community (Silberman, 1971). The criteria for being educated today is acceptance of the dominant middle-class culture of the school and society and the rejection of those ways of seeing the world, of feeling, valuing, acting in the world that characterize the lower-income and, or minority group's personal and communal experiences (Madhubuti, 1977). The penalty for not acquiescing to

acculturation is failure, being pushed out or dropping out (Madhubuti, 1970; Silberman, 1974; Moore (1969).

The Meaning and Implications of Multicultural Education

The American educational system has a deep mono-cultural (Anglo-centric) orientation. This mono-cultural orientation is evident in *what* the schools teach and the *way* they teach (Parekh, 1986). Bennet (1986) reviews the composition of the American school curriculum and finds it "woefully lacking." Williams (1977) explains that it is the educational experience of the students in this nation that the foundation and body of what is said to constitute knowledge is European in origin and content:

> Western "education" proposes that mathematics originated in Greece; art with the Renaissance; literature with Homer, science with Galileo or Newton; philosophy with Socrates; and religion with the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Parekh (1986) agrees and explains that where there is a curriculum on religious studies it largely concentrates on Christianity and either ignores other religions or goes over them in a "confused and cursory manner":

> Christianity is presented as the greatest or even the only true religion, and others are dismissed as primitive and quaint or of inferior quality. Islam is said to be fanatical and dogmatic, whereas the Pope or the Anglican church affirming similar traditional dogmas is held up as a champion of eternal verities.

The conclusion according to Parekh is that little attempt is made to raise the pupil above his own religious beliefs and to get him to enter into the spirit of other religions, "appreciate their vision of the human predicament, understand their complex symbols and imagery, and respect and enjoy them as diverse and fascinating achievements of the human spirit."

Banks (1977) argues that the history curriculum is little better. The history curriculum concentrates on the history of Western Europe primarily and ignores the non-Western civilizations:

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Africa is dismissed as a dark continent whose inhabitants never really rose above animal life, and the Asian societies, though more appreciated, are all supposed to have been governed by despots who lived by plunder and hardly allowed the development culture and civilization.

There are textbooks still in use (with current copyright dates) which proclaim the glory of Europe and present other societies as if they neither had history or culture before the European "discovered" them (Madhubuti, 1977). Parekh (1986) cites the writing of an early twentieth century historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper:

Perhaps in the future there will be some African history, but at present there is none, or very little; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa; the rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European and pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history.

Trevor-Roper reiterates views articulated by Hegel, Marx, J.S. Mills and others. He does not explain what he means by history; why he defines certain types of events as historic or even historical; why his ignorance of the African history should be taken to imply that the latter does not exist; nor why his assumptions that what does not exist for him does not exist at all. Parekh (1986) asserts that repeatedly the mentality articulated by Trevor-Roper is apparent in the tools and methods the schools employ to educate the young:

A child raised on the narcissistic diet of mono-culturalism can hardly be expected to develop his intellect fully, and can hardly be expected to develop sympathetic imagination and acquire much respect for, or even curiosity about non-European cultures. Mercifully, we are becoming increasingly sensitive to the narrow nationalistic bias of school texts. We need to thoroughly combat Eurocentric bias as well.

The resultant phenomena of a mono-cultural diet is a student who easily gains the impression that the terms non-European and civilization are mutually exclusive, and who is not equipped to think critically. Other parts of the curriculum are equally narrow in content and treated in an equally biased manner. Even the importance of foreign language has yet to be fully appreciated in schools. An attitude toward language, as explained by Powdermaker (1967), reflects an attitude toward the people who speak it, "If one valued and took an intelligent and sympathetic interest in other societies one would wish to know more about those societies by learning the language."

Not to encourage a pupil to master a language is not only to shut him off from a different way of understanding and experiencing the world, but also to suggest that the student is unlikely to derive much benefit from it.

In the end what is perhaps clumsily called multicultural education is ultimately nothing more than an attempt to release the student from the confines of the "ethnocentric straitjacket" and awaken him to the existence of other cultures (Monalto, 1982). It is intended to de-condition the students as much as possible in order that he can go out into the world as free from biases and prejudices as possible and able and willing to explore its rich diversity. Multicultural education is therefore education in freedom - freedom from inherited biases and narrow feelings and sentiments, as well as freedom to explore other cultures and perspectives and make one's own choices in full awareness of available alternatives. Most importantly it is freedom from ignorance. Williams (1977) summarizes:

Multi-cultural education is therefore not a departure from nor incompatible with, but a further refinement of, the liberal idea of education. It does not cut off a child from his own culture; rather it enables him to enrich, refine and take a broader view of it without loosing his roots in it. In sum, multicultural education *is* education - through exposure it enables the student to *know*. The inspiring principle of multicultural education then is that it sensitizes the student to the inherent plurality of the world - "the plurality of systems, beliefs, ways of life, cultures, modes of analyzing familiar experiences, and ways of looking at what constitutes knowledge." Most importantly, that which constitutes the body of knowledge and those who have contributed to knowledge are rightfully exposed to the student.

The Implications of Mono-culturalism

What are the implications of mono-cultural education on the student, and how does mono-cultural education measure up to the objectives the schools claim to achieve?

Mono-cultural education is unlikely to awaken a student's curiosity about other societies and cultures either because he is not exposed to them at all, or because they are presented in uncomplimentary terms, or both. Thus, where there is a curriculum on religious studies, a student is hardly likely to be inspired to inquire about how some non-Christian religions manage to do

without the idea of a Christian God as the creator of the universe, or about how other religions have very different views of prophets, conceptions of human destiny, and how these religions come to terms with death and suffering in very different ways (Parekh, 1986). A child exposed to no other religion but his own grow up asking only those questions that the religion encourages him to ask. And since the student asks only those questions that his religion answers, the pupil finds his religion's answers satisfactory. In other words, the student never gets out of its framework, and never feels disturbed or perplexed enough to explore other religions. What is true of religious studies is equally true of history, geography, literature, social studies, and so on, none of which is likely to stimulate the student to truly think critically about and be curious about other civilizations.

Second, mono-cultural education is unlikely to develop the faculty of imagination. Imagination represents the ability to conceive alternatives; that is, it is the capacity to recognize that things can get done, societies can be organized and activities can be performed in several different ways (Bennett, 1986) Imagination does not develop in a vacuum. Hollins (1983) explains that it is only when one is exposed to different societies and cultures that one's imagination is stimulated and the consciousness of alternatives becomes an inseparable part of one's way of thinking. It is only then that a student's former schemas can be totally challenged and subsequently changed (an awareness of alternatives radically alters one's perspective). Monocultural education blots out the awareness of alternatives and restricts imagination. It encourages the illusion that the Anglo-centric view of the world is in fact the world and not merely a perspective. It encourages the illusion that the Anglo-centric way of doing things is the way to do things (Powdermaker, 1963).

Third, mono-cultural education stunts the growth of the critical faculty. A child taught to look at the world from the narrow perspective of the Anglo-centric curriculum and who is not exposed to any other view is bound to reject all that cannot be accommodated within the narrow categories of this perspective or schema. Cognitive conflict, due to the very nature of the curriculum is not facilitated (Gagne, 1973) The student judges cultures and societies by the norms and standards derived from the Anglo-centric

perspective, thus the students predictably find other cultures odd and even worthless. Though the attempt is to instill in the student an attitude of openness to diversity, what the student experiences, because of the narrowness of the curriculum, presents a barrier to the attainment of the desired attitude (Banks, 1977). Because a student judges his society in terms of its own norms, the student can never genuinely take a critical attitude to it. A child raised on such a mono-cultural diet as this is not educated in the full and true sense of the term.

Fourth, mono-cultural education tends to breed arrogance and insensitivity - by-products of ignorance based on a lack of exposure and truthful education (Parekh, 1986). Most devastating is that the child who is not taught and does not experience the reality that all cultures have contributed to the body of knowledge that is being studied, becomes a prisoner within the framework of an Anglo-centric education. Fifth, mono-cultural education provides a fertile ground for racism. Since the pupil learns very little about other societies and cultures, he can only respond to them in terms of superficial generalizations and stereotypes. These, in turn, are not haphazard products of individual imagination but are culturally derived. A culture not informed by a sensitive appreciation of others only judges them in terms of its own norms (Powdermaker, 1963). Mono-cultural education sets up the Anglo-centric perspective as an absolute - as the only universally valid point of reference - and evaluates other societies and their perspectives in terms of their approximation to it. The greater the degree to which other societies resemble it, the more civilized or developed they are said to be. And conversely, the more they diverge from it, the more uncivilized they are judged to be. Parekh (1986) states:

> ...the Victorians built up a hierarchy of human societies. They place the African societies at the bottom, the Asians a little higher, the Mediterranean still higher, and so on until they got to the English who they regarded as representing the highest stage of human development. When asked why other societies should have remained backward and his own should be so advanced, the usual tendency was, and still is, to give a racist explanation. It is the 'genius' of the Anglo 'race' that has enabled it to achieve such great heights, and conversely the misfortunes of other societies are due to the 'inferiority 'of their race.

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Such an attitude, albeit in an attenuated form, is still discernible in school textbooks and in the attitudes of some teachers. A student growing up and being educated on this present Anglo-centric diet becomes intellectually malnourished! The greater travesty is that neither the educator nor the student realizes the injustice. A student can walk away from the present curriculum thinking that non-European societies were and are inferior (this, if the student is even aware such societies exist), culturally deficient and perhaps worthless. The student learns that other non-Western societies have basically contributed nothing to the growth of human civilization, invented nothing of which others would take note, composed nothing which others could read with profit, built no empires, left behind nothing that is really worth preserving or even cherishing, and indeed had lived such a fragile and primitive life that, but for the white colonizers, they would have by now become extinct (Madhubuti,1973; Hollins, 1983). Again, the outstanding travesty of this situation is that the student and the educator think that education is taking place when in fact it is not.

Logico-mathematical knowledge is constructed by coordinating relationships (Gagne, 1973). If in fact the goal of education is to have the student attain higher order thinking skills thus utilizing logico-mathematical knowledge appropriately, the model for mulitcultural education addresses that objective better than the model of mono-cultural education. A school can facilitate the recognition of diversity which is a prerequisite to coordinating cognitive relationships. In addition, the structure of the school could be so broadened as to reflect the different cultures of its pupils. The school could accommodate different dietary preferences (expanding physical knowledge), permit variation in dress or choice of sport, celebrate major holidays of its constituent community (expanding social-conventional knowledge), and so on, thereby building in plurality and diversity into its day-to-day practices. Thus the school environment could better provide fertile ground for the acquisition of critical thinking skills. Yao (1983) discusses the development of critical thinking skills in the learner:

If a child is taught through integrated multicultural instructional material and also experiences diversity in his school environment he necessarily will view the world differently.

This recognition that diversity and unity can occur and exist simultaneously could be among the first steps toward acquiring higher order cognitive skills.

According to Gagne (1986), instruction must mesh with and support the natural constructive process. The implication of this for utilization of a multicultural model of education is that what the learner experiences in this mode of learning must accompany the student's cognitive and maturational levels. Thus by sensitizing the child (in ways that are appropriate given his developmental level) to the inherent plurality of the world , the student by virtue of the very nature of his learning experience, is more likely to develop thinking patterns that facilitate the attainment of the higher order cognitive skills. These skills will be based in the experiences that inundate him in his learning environment.

If education is concerned with the development of such human capacities as curiosity, self-criticism, capacity for reflection, ability to form an independent judgment, sensitivity, intellectual humility and respect for others, and to open the pupil's mind to the great achievements of mankind, then it must be multicultural. Walsh (1979) proclaims that mono-cultural education not only does not fully develop these qualities and capacities, but tends to encourage their opposites. "It simply is not good education... That it tends to inflict grave psychological and moral damage on the ethnic minority is further argument against it."

Assessment of the Validity of Criticisms Made Against Multiculturalism

The case for multicultural education does not in any way depend on the presence of ethnic minority students in schools. The increasing presence of minority children has, no doubt, brought into sharp relief the mono-cultural orientation of education and highlighted its consequences (Parekh, 1986). However, the presence of minority students is not the reason for accepting multicultural education. Simply put, multicultural education is good education, whereas mono-cultural education is not. It is good for all children regardless of their ethnicity and/or culture. The case for it would be just as strong if there were no ethnic minority students in the schools.

Pizzollo (1983) reports that conservative object to multicultural education on three grounds:

> First, it damages a good educational system by subordinating it to the demands of ethnic minorities. Second, it militates against the basic purpose of education, namely to initiate future citizens into a common public culture without which a society cannot be held together. And third, multi-cultural education is socially divisive as it accentuates the cultural self-consciousness of the ethnic minorities, and prevents their integration into mainstream society.

With regard to the first criticism, multicultural education does not depend on the presence of ethnic minority children in the schools. It is desirable for no other reason than that is good education for all children. As for the second criticism, education (in the truest sense of the term) is concerned with a much wider objective than initiating a pupil into a common public culture. Further, to advocate multicultural education is not to deny the need for a common public culture, but only to argue that the common culture could be less rigid and biased (Verma and Bagley, 1982). Finally, as for the third criticism there is no reason why the heightened self-conscious of the ethnic minority should militate against integration. Indeed, multicultural education does not subvert social integration, rather it offers a different model of it (Parekh, 1986).

DISCUSSION

The area where the principle of multicultual education is most relevant is obviously that of the curriculum. A curriculum conceived in a multicultural perspective has two features. First, it is not unduly narrow. No curriculum can cover everything in the world and must of necessity be selective. However, selection can be made on various grounds, some more justified than others. Selection based on a multicultural perspective would aim to ensure that the child acquires some familiarity with the major representative form of the subject in question, and that while he would concentrate on some, his curiosity would be sufficiently stimulated to follow up on the rest independently.

Second, the curriculum should be taught in a manner that is as little biased as possible. Slavery, for example, can be seen in several different ways and is viewed very differently by the slave-owning and slave-supplying societies. Similarly, colonial rule looks very different depending on whether one studies it from the standpoint of a metropolitan power or its colony. In other words, the so-called facts are always and necessarily impregnated with interpretations and although some are more plausible than others, all interpretations are partial. The curriculum should therefore be taught in a manner that alerts the pupil to this fact and leaves him free, even encourages him to examine the various interpretations and arrive at a view of his own.

The teacher needs to be equally cautious in teaching other societies, cultures, religions, moral systems and so on. She should elucidate their beliefs and practices with intelligence and sensitivity, and give an account of them as close as possible to one that would be given by someone belonging to them; ideally she should let another culture, religion or society speak for itself. It is only when this is done that evaluation of it has a meaning. However, evaluating another society in terms of the norms of one's own inevitably leads to distortion and is intellectually illegitimate. Instead, a teacher should encourage her pupils to set up a dialogue between their own and another society, exploring each in terms of the other, asking questions about another society that arise from their own and asking questions about the latter that someone from another society would wish to ask. Beyond this a teacher cannot go. She is not an arbiter between different societies; and it is not her business to deliver the final judgment . She owes it to her pupils to let them arrive at their own judgments (Verma and Bagley, 1982).

Contrary to what some writers have said, the principle of multi-cultural education does not imply that other cultures cannot be judged. Rather that the judgment must be based on the fullest understanding of their character and complexity. Further, if they can be judged, so can one's own, and therefore the latter cannot be treated as sacrosanct. Again, judging a culture is a highly intricate enterprise and one must avoid the mistake of judging it on the basis of the norms and values of one's own culture.

Nor does the principle of multicultural education imply that different cultures and, societies, and religions are equally good. Such a judgment

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presupposes a transcultural standard, and that is not available. Parekh (1986) explains that even as respect for all men does not commit one to the view that they are all equally good or possess an equal potential; respect for all cultures as implied in the principal of multicultural education does not mean that they are all equally good. Rather, it means that they make sense in their own contexts, have a right to be understood in their own terms, and need to be explored with sensitivity and sympathy. Powdermaker (1967) asserts:

> Respect for a culture is not a reward for its achievements. Rather a culture is an achievement, and to respect it is to recognize it as the expression of the efforts and aspirations of a group of intelligent fellow human beings.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate question that this paper intends to address is, "Does the present mono-cultural (Anglo-centric) curriculum facilitate the acquisition and utilization of critical thinking skills by students?" My contention is that education, as it is presently conceived and fails. By failing to recognize, integrate and teach the contributions of multiple cultures to what we call the body of knowledge, schooling keeps the student from moving toward cognitive conflict, the prerequisite to developing critical thinking skills. Students do not leave American schools questioning the validity of their education. The Anglo-centric perspective is taught in every subject area. This perspective has been so insidiously and pervasively integrated that one does not even question it as merely a perspective but accepts it as a truth that it is not, and accepts it as education, which it is not. If diversity, as presented in multicultural educational approach is inextricably bound to instruction in all subject areas, then education by its very nature will facilitate the student's acquisition of critical thinking skills.

The world presented through Anglo-centric eyes is not the world. The impetus in the United States for employing a multicultural educational approach stems from the realization of the following facts: (a)the white race is a world minority; (b) five out of six people in the world are not-white and the majority is non-Christian; and (c) by the year 2000 fifty-five percent of the

American school population will be more reflective of world demographics. Though these statements are facts, it is my contention that they should not be the impetus for multicultural educational reform. The impetus should be a desire to structure education so that it truly enlightens the student. It is time for *schooling* to transform into *education !*

Education should view the learner as a person who comes to the learning situation with a cultural background that is inextricably bound to how the learner will learn and what the learner will learn. Education should view the learner as a "truth seeker" thirsting for diversity and benefiting from exposure to it. Those in leadership positions in education - teachers, principals, boards of education, colleges of education - along with those who author instructional materials - basals, workbooks, etc. - must reexamine whose reality is being taught and who is being prepared for what kind of future!

Finally Grace Nichol's epic poem, " I is Long Memoried Woman" serves as an example of the kind of material that can extend the understanding of both pupils and teachers. Spanning this experience of an African woman uprooted through slavery to the Caribbean soil, the poem, as the following extract shows, is concerned with the disintegrating force of the colonial experience and the solidarity and endurance of the women:

> We the women who toil
>
> unadorn
>
> heads tie with cheap
>
> cotton
>
> We the women who cut
>
> clear fetch dig sing

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